

The Charlotte Observer

Pittenger says his goal is bipartisanship

By: Jim Morrill – January 9th, 2013

New U.S. Rep. Robert Pittenger said Wednesday that a pair of freshman orientations has left him with a new commitment – to bipartisanship.

“I believe in relationships, really, really believe in relationships,” said the 9th District Republican. “You don’t have to leave your core conservative principles to build relationships with other people.”

Pittenger was known as a hard-charging conservative during his five years in the state Senate. He was elected to succeed fellow Charlotte Republican Rep. Sue Myrick in Congress.

He said a freshman orientation this week in Colonial Williamsburg and earlier at Harvard gave him renewed appreciation for bi-partisanship.

Partisan politics has created an often toxic environment in Congress. Last week both sides had to go over the “fiscal cliff” before reaching a compromise on taxes.

This week Public Policy Polling found only 9 percent of American voters approve the job Congress is doing, while 85 percent disapprove. The Raleigh-based firm found that cockroaches, lice, root canals and even used car salesmen are more popular than Congress.

“The climate there has been so visceral and hostile,” Pittenger said. “You just don’t have to be so angry. You can sit down and talk.”

He said he was encouraged when an Obama administration official acknowledged at one orientation that Democrats had to agree to entitlement cuts.

Asked what he would be willing to compromise on, Pittenger said, “I’m not going to get into that. That’s really speculative.”

“I don’t see any basis to increase tax rates,” he added.

Pittenger said he would have voted against the fiscal cliff compromise, what he called a “baby Band-Aid” to the nation’s fiscal problems. He did join 219 other Republicans in voting to re-elect Rep. John Boehner of Ohio as speaker.

Pittenger is organizing a community gathering later this month on the Affordable Care Act. The presentation will take place Jan. 29 at CPCC's Harris Campus.

The featured speaker will be Michael Tanner, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute and critic of the act. After the Supreme Court upheld the law last summer, Tanner wrote an op-ed for the New York Post headlined, "ObamaCare's Now a Bigger Mess."

"I'm a critic too," Pittenger said. "But it's the law of the land right now. What I was looking for is somebody who's done a comprehensive analysis of the law. I don't like it but we'd better understand it."